

PROCEEDINGS OF THE HISTORIC CONSERVATION BOARD

MONDAY, MAY 7, 2001

3:00 P.M., J. MARTIN GRIESEL ROOM, CENTENNIAL PLAZA II

The Historic Conservation Board met at 3:00 P.M., in the J. Martin Griesel Room, Centennial Plaza II, with the following members present: Borys, Dale, Kreider, Raser, Senhauser, Spraul-Schmidt, Sullebarger and Wallace. Mr. Bloomfield was absent.

MINUTES

The minutes of the April 23, 2001 HCB meeting were approved as amended (motion by Sullebarger second by Boris).

CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS AND ZONING VARIANCE, 1119-1121 RACE STREET, OVER-THE-RHINE (SOUTH) HISTORIC DISTRICT

Staff member Caroline Kellam presented the staff report on this project that was first heard by the Board at its March 12, 2001 meeting. At that time, the Board approved a development plan to extend the bar use at 1119 Race Street into the adjacent property at 1121 Race, but did not approve a COA for the proposed patio and screen wall. The Board requested the owner to return with revisions to the plans for a masonry wall and landscaping. The new plan calls for a 10-foot high stucco wall with brick pilasters. Staff recommended that the wall be reduced in height to 7 feet and faced in brick.

Wayne Harris, the owner, and Don Beck, the current architect for this project, were present to provide information to the HCB.

Mr. Beck spoke in favor of the revised plan. He said that the proposed wall is set back 39 feet from the street (not on the property line), runs between two buildings of four and five stories whose lower side walls were also stuccoed and screens a two-story concrete block garage from street view. He also argued that a 7-foot high wall would not provide sufficient security when vehicles were parked against it and that a 10-foot wall would provide greater sound attenuation for the street. He emphasized that the owners are restoring the building façade and interior of 1119 Race and bringing a new business into the neighborhood. He noted that the new plan incorporates a planting bed for evergreen vines to soften the effect of the stucco wall. He said that previous attempts to maintain landscaping on this block have not been successful.

In response to a question from Ms. Borys, Mr. Beck said a deeper planter designed to keep vehicles farther from the wall would eliminate 4 parking spaces. Ms. Borys suggested that a 7-foot masonry wall topped by a 3-foot iron fence would help to reduce the solidity and increase the variety of the wall. Mr. Beck said that such a scheme would not solve the security problem and would encourage passers-by to throw objects over it. Ms. Sullebarger said she thinks the proposed plans were acceptable; she said she would feel more strongly about the height of the wall if it were on the lot line.

BOARD ACTION

On the motion of Ms. Sullebarger, the Board voted unanimously to call the question.

On a motion by Dale, seconded by Spraul-Schmidt, the Board voted six in favor; Dale and Sullebarger opposed, and took the following actions:

1. Approved the privacy wall design with the following conditions:
 - (a) Reduce the height of the wall to a maximum of 7 feet.
 - (b) Submit revised drawings to the Urban Conservator for final review and approval prior to issuing a Certificate of Appropriateness and a building permit;
2. Approved a conditional accessory use and zoning variance to allow construction of a 7-foot privacy wall as per Section 1419-311 (a) finding that such relief from the literal implication of the Zoning Code:
 - a) Is necessary and appropriate in the interest of historic conservation so as not to adversely affect the historic architectural or aesthetic integrity of the district; and
 - b) Will not be materially detrimental to the public health, safety, and welfare or injurious to the property in the district or vicinity where the property is located.

CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS AND ZONING VARIANCE—4219 HAMILTON AVENUE, NEW LIBRARY GROUND SIGN, NORTHSIDE NBD HISTORIC DISTRICT

Ms. Kellam presented the staff report on a proposal by the Hamilton County Library to install a 10-foot high, internally lighted, double-faced ground sign at the Northside Library. Staff believes that the sign as proposed does not meet the Historic District guidelines and is out of scale and character with the library and streetscape. Ms. Kellam said that although the Northside NBD guidelines do not specifically prohibit internally illuminated signs, such signs have been discouraged in other historic districts.

Ms. Kellam said that in addition to a COA, three zoning variances would be required. The O1A Suburban Office district does not permit: 1) a sign area in excess of 12 square feet, 2) a sign height greater than 6 feet and 3) an

internally illuminated sign. Staff recommended that the sign be reduced to 12 square feet per side, be reduced in height to 6 feet and be externally lighted so as not to require a zoning variance.

Mr. Gerald Harley, architect representing the Hamilton County Library, was present to address the Board. Ms. Kellam said that no one attended the pre-hearing or contacted the HCB office. Tim Jeckering, president of the Northside Community Council, was present on another matter before the Board; he acknowledged that his Council had not taken a position on the sign; therefore, he could not officially represent its view.

Mr. Harley indicated that the proposed sign was a prototype design to be used throughout the library system. He said the signs have been approved for six other sites in the City and that three others are under review for EQ districts where modifications have been requested.

Mr. Harley said that the 4 /1 ratio of the sign simulates a bookmark; studies indicated that the sign should not be less than 8 feet tall. He showed photographs of a freestanding bulletin board sign across the street from the library that is approximately 7 feet 4 inches tall. He said that the southern portion of the library site is zoned B2 and would not require variances for the sign as proposed.

Mr. Harley showed photographs of a similar sign; he said that only the text of the sign would be illuminated and that an externally lighted sign would distract motorists. Mr. Senhauser emphasized that Northside is a more urban setting than many libraries; he suggested adapting the sign size and illumination to fit the urban conditions of this library branch. The Board suggested that the sign be reduced in height and width to preserve the 4:1 ratio consistent with both the library's signage program and the historic integrity and pedestrian scale of the neighborhood. Mr. Harley said the Library Board must approve any variance to the prototype in design or size. Mr. Harley suggested that the sign might be moved to the south, into the B2 zone. The Board confirmed a Certificate of Appropriateness would still be required and the size and lighting of the sign would remain a concern.

Mr. Jeckering said the sign as proposed will sit on a knoll that makes it appear even taller. He suggested placing the sign at a lower elevation closer to the sidewalk where it would be more visible.

Mr. Young reminded the Board that it had previously approved internally lighted signs with opaque backgrounds in other historic districts, Ms. Sullebarger indicated that her concern was not only for the district guidelines but also for the zoning variances required.

BOARD ACTION

The Board voted unanimously (motion by Kreider second by Spraul-Schmidt) to table the motion to allow time for the architect to convey the Board's recommendations to his client and suggested he return with a modified design that would respect the urban character of the historic district.

CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS & ZONING VARIANCE, 1000 ELM STREET, COURT STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT, DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT

Staff member Adrienne Cowden explained to the Board that the owners of the Washington Platform Saloon & Restaurant were requesting a zoning variance and Certificate of Appropriateness to install a temporary banner for its annual oyster festival. Because the banner would be temporary and would be installed in the same location during the same time period each year, the owners asked that a 30-day permit be approved for 2001, 2002 and 2003.

BOARD ACTION

The Board voted unanimously (motion by Spraul-Schmidt second by Sullebarger) to accept the staff recommendation to:

1. Approve a Certificate of Appropriateness for the installation of the Banner, as illustrated in the design and photographs, for a period of 30 days beginning on the last Monday in March for the years 2001 through 2003, provided that the banner not be changed and no other banner be installed during the same time period;
2. Grant a variance from the strict application of the Downtown Development Regulations to permit the installation of the proposed banner as illustrated in the design and photographs, finding that such relief from the literal implication of the Zoning Code:
 - (a) Is necessary and appropriate in the interest of historic conservation so as not to adversely affect the historic architectural or aesthetic integrity of the district; and
 - (b) Will not be materially detrimental to the public health, safety and welfare or injurious to the property in the district or vicinity where the property is located.

PRELIMINARY DESIGN REVIEW, 3 BEECHWOOD LANE, EAST WALNUT HILLS HISTORIC DISTRICT

Staff member Daniel Young summarized the staff report indicating that there were two principle design issues for the Board to consider: 1) the compatibility of the design and siting of a new garage and screen walls in the side yard east of the house and 2) the impact of a brick wall enclosing the rear and a portion of the side yard west of the house. In addition, zoning variances may be required for 1) a second garage, 2) a garage in a side yard 3) side yard setbacks.

Mr. Young introduced Tom Jeckering, architect for the project, and indicated that a formal application for a COA would likely be made at the next HCB meeting.

Mr. Jeckering showed plans and elevations and summarized the scope of the project. A new garage will be built in the east side yard in front of the existing garage; materials and design elements of the existing garage will be picked up in the new structure. A new 6' brick wall will link the garages and house to create an enclosed motor court screening vehicles from the street and neighbors. The brick wall will extend along the rear property line and enclose the west side yard behind the front face of the house.

Mr. Senhauser confirmed that the East Walnut Hills Historic District guidelines state that walls and fences exceeding 36 inches, privacy fences, retaining walls and wrought iron fences are not considered characteristic and disrupt the park-like flow from property to property. Board members suggested alternatives such as reducing the height of the wall (as elsewhere in the district), relocating the wall further behind the front façade or substituting hedges or other natural screening for the masonry wall.

The Board agreed that constructing two garages is a creative and appropriate solution, but some expressed concern that such extensive brick walls create a segregated compound separating the house from the neighborhood and its linked landscape. Mr. Jeckering said that his client is most concerned about privacy for the rear yard and suggested that substantial landscaping could soften the effect of the brick walls.

[Mr. Kreider and Ms. Borys left the meeting.]

BOARD ACTION

Because this was a preliminary design review, it required no Board action.

UPDATE ON THE OVER-THE-RHINE (NORTH) HISTORIC DISTRICT DESIGNATION

Urban Conservator William Forwood reported that within a few days Council must decide whether to extend the NHR ordinance for Over-the-Rhine. If the extension is granted, the Board should hear the proposal for an Over-the-Rhine (North) Historic District at its July 23, 2001 meeting; this will allow sufficient time for the City Planning Commission and City Council to consider the district before the NHR expires October 1, 2001.

Mr. Senhauser appointed Mmes. Spraul-Schmidt, Sullebarger and Wallace as a committee to study the OTR (North) Historic District designation and recommend any changes to the guidelines. Mr. Forwood said there is

concern on the part of the OTR Planning Steering Committee that the historic district guidelines not be so prohibitive as to drive away developers and potential employers.

OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Forwood reported that the Neighborhood and Public Works Committee will consider the extension of the NHR at 12 PM, Tuesday, May 8.

Ms. Sullebarger said that trees have been removed from the Cincinnati Milacron site and that demolition of the main buildings is underway.

Ms. Sullebarger reported that CPA continues to negotiate with Rev. Jordan to avert the demolition of the Walnut Hills Presbyterian Church. A demolition permit issued last year has expired.

Mr. Forwood said that the Historic Homeownership Assistance Act is again being considered by Congress. The most recent iteration targets historic properties within empowerment zones and those within census tracts with a median income less than twice the state median income.

ADJOURNMENT

As there were no other items for consideration by the Board, the meeting adjourned (motion by Sullebarger second by Spraul-Schmidt).

William L. Forwood
Urban Conservator

John C. Senhauser
Chairman

Date